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SAINT-GAUDENS

BY ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON.

I.

UPLANDS of Cornish! Ye, that yesterday
Were only beauteous, now are consecrate.
Exalted are your humble slopes, to mate
Proud Settignano and Fiesole,
For here new-born is Italy's new birth of Art.
In your belovèd precincts of repose
Now is the laurel lovelier than the rose.

Henceforth there shall be seen
An unaccustomed glory in the sheen
Of yonder lingering river, overleant with green,
Whose fountains hither happily shall start,
Like eager Umbrian rills, that kiss and part,
For that their course will run
One to the Tiber, to the Arno one.

O hills of Cornish! chalice of our spilled wine,
Ye shall become a shrine,
For now our Donatello is no more!
He who could pour
His spirit into clay, has lost the clay he wore,
And Death, again, at last,
Has robbed the Future to enrich the Past.
He, who so often stood
At joyous worship in your Sacred Wood,

He shall be missed
 As autumn meadows miss the lark,
 Where Summer and Song were wont to keep melodious tryst.
 His fellows of the triple guild shall hark
 For his least whisper in the starry dark.
 Here, in his memory, Youth shall dedicate
 Laborious years to that unfolding which is Fate.
 By Beauty's faintest gleams
 She shall be followed over glades and streams.
 And all that is shall be forgot
 For what is not;
 And every common path shall lead to dreams.

II.

Poet of Cornish, comrade of his days:
 When late we met,
 With his remembrance how thine eyes were wet!
 Thy faltering voice his praise
 More eloquently did rehearse
 Than on his festal day thy liquid verse.
 Since once to love is never to forget,
 Let us defer our plaint of private sorrow
 Till some less unethereal to-morrow.
 To-day is not the poet's shame
 But the dull world's; not yet
 Shall it be kindled at the living flame
 Whose treasured embers
 Ever the world remembers.
 Not so the sculptor—his immediate bays
 No hostile climate withers or delays.
 Let us forego the debt of friendly duty;
 A nation newly is bereft of beauty.
 Sing with me now his undeferrèd fame,—
 For Time impatient is to set
 This jewel in his country's coronet.
 When all men with new accent speak his name,
 And all are blended in a vast regret,
 There is no place for grief of thee or me:
 One reckons not the rivers in the sea.
 Sing not to-day the hearth despoiled of fire:

Ours be the trumpet, not the lyre.
Death makes the great
The treasure and the sorrow of the State.
Nor is it less bereaved
By what is unachieved.
Oh, what a miracle is Fame!
We carve some lately unfamiliar name
Upon an outer wall, as challenge to the sun;
And half its claim
Is deathless work undone.
Although the story of our art is brief,
Thrice in the record, at a fadeless leaf,
Falls an unfinished chapter; thrice the flower
Closed ere the noonday glory drank its dew;
Thrice have we lost of promise and of power—
The torch extinguished at its brightest hour—
His comrades all, for whom he twined the rue.
But though they stand authentic and apart
This is in our new land the first great grief of Art.

III.

Yet, sound for him the trumpet, not the lyre—
Him of the ardent, not the smouldering, fire:
Whose boyhood knew full streets of martial song
When the slow purpose of the throng
Flamed to a new religion, and a soul.
He knew the lure of flags; caught first the far drums' roll;
Thrilled with the flash that runs
Along the slanted guns;
Kept time to the determined feet
That ominously beat
Upon the city's floor
The firm, mad rhythm of war.
With envious enterprise
He saw the serried eyes
That, level to the hour's demand,
Looked straight toward Duty's promised land.
Then to be boy was to be prisoned fast
With the great world of battle sweeping past
While every hill and hollow

Heard the heart-melting music, calling "Follow!"
 The day o'erbrimmed with longing, and the night
 With beckoning dreams of many a dauntless fight,
 As though doomed heroes summoned us to see

Thermopylæ and Marathons.

—Ah, had he known who was to be
 Their laureate in bronze!

But who can read To-morrow in To-day?
 Fame makes no bargain with us, will not say
 Do thus, and thou shalt gain, or thus and lose;
 Nay, will not let us for another choose

The trodden and the lighted way.

She burns the accepted pattern, breaks the mould,
 Prefers the novel to the old,

Revels in secrets and surprise;

And while the wise

Seek knowledge at the sages' gate

The schoolboy by a truant path keeps rendezvous with Fate.

IV.

This is the honey in the lion's jaws:

That from the reverberant roar

And wrack of savage war

Art saves a sweet repose, by mystic laws

Not by long labor learned

But by keen love discerned;

For this it bears the palm:

To show the storms of life in terms of calm.

Not what he knew, but what he felt,

Gave secret power to this Celt.

Master of harmony, his sense could find

A bond of likeness among things diverse,

And could their forms in beauty so immerse

That, to the enchanted mind,

Ideal and real seem a single kind.

Behold our gaunt Crusader, grimly brave,

The swooping eagle in his face,

The very genius of command,

And her not less, with her imperious hand,—
 The herald Victory holding equal pace.
 Not trulier in the blast
 Moves prow with mast;
 Line mates with flowing line, as wave with following wave—
 Rider and homely horse
 Intent upon their course
 As though she went not with them. Near or far
 One is their import: she the dream, the star—
 And he the prose, the iron thrust—of War.

V.

So, on the travelled verge
 Of storied Boston's green acropolis
 That sculptured music, that immortal dirge
 That better than towering shaft
 Has fitly epitaphed
 The hated ranks men did not dare to hiss!
 When Duty makes her clarion call to Ease
 Let her repair and point to this:
 Why seek another clime?
 Why seek another place?
 We have no Parthenon, but a nobler frieze,—
 Since sacrifice than worship nobler is.
 It sings—the anthem of a rescued race;
 It moves—the epic of a patriot time,
 And each heroic figure makes a martial rhyme.
 How like ten thousand treads that little band,
 Fit for the van of armies! What command
 Sits in that saddle! What renouncing will!
 What portent grave of firm-confronted ill!
 And as a cloud doth hover over sea,
 Born from its waters and returning there,
 Fame, sprung from thoughts of mortals, swims the air
 And gives them back her memories, deathlessly.

VI.

I wept by Lincoln's pall when children's tears,
 That saddest of the nation's years,
 Were reckoned in the census of her grief;

And, flooding every eye,
 Of low estate or high,
 The crystal sign of sorrow made men peers.
 The rain-drop on the April leaf
 Was not more unashamed. Hand spoke to hand
 A universal language; and whene'er
 The hopeful met 'twas but to mingle their despair.
 Our yesterday's war-widowed land
 To-day was orphaned. Its victorious voice
 Lost memory of the power to rejoice.
 For he whom all had learned to love was prone.
 The weak had slain the mighty; by a whim
 The ordered edifice was overthrown
 And lay in futile ruin, mute and dim.

O Death, thou sculptor without art,
 What didst thou to the Lincoln of our heart?
 Where was the manly eye
 That conquered enmity?
 Where was the gentle smile
 So innocent of guile—
 The message of good-will
 To all men, whether good or ill?
 Where shall we trace
 Those treasured lines, half humor and half pain,
 That made him doubly brother to the race?
 For these, O Death, we search thy mask in vain!

Yet shall the Future be not all bereft:
 Not without witness shall its eyes be left.
 The soul, again, is visible through Art,
 Servant of God and Man. The immortal part
 Lives in the miracle of a kindred mind,
 That found itself in seeking for its kind.
 The humble by the humble is discerned;
 And he whose melancholy broke in sunny wit
 Could be no stranger unto him who turned
 From sad to gay, as though in jest he learned
 Some mystery of sorrow. It was writ:
The hand that shapes us Lincoln must be strong

*As his that righted our bequeathed wrong;
 The heart that shows us Lincoln must be brave,
 An equal comrade unto king or slave;
 The mind that gives us Lincoln must be clear*

As that of seer

*To fathom deeps of faith abiding under tides of fear.
 What wonder Fame, impatient, will not wait*

To call the sculptor great

Who keeps for us in bronze the soul that saved the State!

VII.

Most fair his dreams and visions when he dwelt
 His spirit's comrade. Meagre was his speech
 Of things celestial, save in line and mould;
 But sudden cloud-rift may reveal a star
 As surely as the unimpeded sky.
 The deer has its deep forest of retreat:
 Shall the shy spirit have none? Be, then,
 The covert unprofaned wherein withdrew
 The soul that 'neath his pondering ardor lay?
 Find the last frontier—Man is still unknown ground.

Things true and beautiful made a heaven for him.
 Childhood, the sunrise of the spirit world,
 Yielded its limpid secrets to his eye.
 He gave his art to Friendship with a zest—
 Wax to receive and metal to endure.
 Looking upon his warriors facing death,
 Heroes seem human, such as all might be—
 Yet not without the consecrating will!
 Age is serener by his honoring;
 And when he sought the temple's inmost fane
 The angels of his Adoration lent
 Old hopes new glory, and his reverent hand
 Wrought like Beato at the face of Christ.

But what is this that, neither Hope nor Doom,
 Waits with eternal patience at a tomb?
 A brooding spirit without name or date,
 Or race, or nation, or belief;

Beyond the reach of joy or grief,
 Above the plane of wrong or right;
 A riddle only to the sorrowless; the mate
 Of all the elements in calm—still winter night,
 Sea after tempest, time-scarred mountain height;
 Passive as Buddha, single as the Sphynx,—
 Yet neither that sweet god that seems to smile
 On mortal good and guile,
 Nor wide-eyed monster that into Egypt sinks
 And Beast and Nature links;
 But something human, with an inward sense
 Profound, but nevermore intense;
 And though it doth not stoop to teach,
 It will with each
 Attuned to beauty hold a muted speech;
 In its Madonna-lidded meditation
 Not more a mystery than a revelation;
 Listen! It doth to Man the Universe relate;
 If this be Fate, is it not still *our* Fate?

Let us no further venture—sacred be
 That secret of the Ages, which not he
 That wrought it knew, nor yet how great
 His Sentinel before the Future's Gate.
 For those who have not lived, but must breathe on
 Prisoners of this prosaic age—
 Ah, who for them shall read that page
 Since wingèd Shelley and wise Emerson are gone?

* * * * *

Across our Western world without surcease
 How many a column sounds the name of Greece!
 The sun loath-lingering on the crest of Rome,
 Finds here how many an imitative dome!
 O classic quarries of our modern thought,
 What blasphemies in stone from you are wrought!
 For though to Law, Religion, or the State,
 These stones to Beauty first are dedicate,
 Yet to what purpose, if we but revere
 The temple, not the goddess?—if whene'er

The magic of her deep obsession seem
To master any soul, we call it dream?

Come, let us live with Beauty!

Her name is ever on our lips; but who
Holds Beauty as the fairest bride to woo?
The gods oft wedded mortals: now alone
May man the Chief Immortal make his own.
To Time each day adds increment of age
But Beauty ne'er grows old. There is no gauge
To count the glories of the counted hours.
Flowers die, but not the ecstasy of flowers.

Come, let us live with Beauty!

What infinite treasure hers! and what small need
Of our cramped natures, whose misguided greed,
Houndlike, pursues false trails of Luxury
Or sodden Comfort! Who shall call us free—
Content if but some casual wafture come
From fields Elysian, where the valleys bloom
With life delectable? Such happy air
Should be the light we live in; unaware
It should be breathed, till man retrieves the joy
Philosophy has wrested from the boy.

Come, let us live with Beauty!

Who shall put limit to her sovereignty?

Who shall her loveliness define?

Think you the Graces only three?—

The Muses only nine?

Beyond our star-sown deep of space
Where, as for solace, huddles world with world
(A human instinct in the primal wrack),
Mayhap there is a dark and desert place

Of deeper awe

With but one outer star, there hurled
By cataclysm and there held in leash by law:
If lonely be that star, 'tis not for Beauty's lack.
She was ere there was any need of Truth,
She was ere there was any stir of Love;
And when Man came, and made her world uncouth

With sin, and cities, and the gash of hills
 And forests, and a thousand brutish ills,
 Regardless of his ruth
 She hid her wounds and gave him, from above,
 The magic all his happiness is fashioned of.

VIII.

Knights of the five arts that our sculptor prized:
 How shall ye honor him and, in his place,
 Those others of the Old and Happy Race
 Who lived for beauty, and the golden lure despised?

* * * * *

Painter of music, Architect of song,
 Sculptor in color, Poet in clay and bronze,
 And thou whose unsubstantial fancy builds
 Abiding symphonies from stone and space!
 Mount ye to large horizons: ever be
 As avid of other beauty as your own.
 As nations greater are than all their states,
 More than the sum of all the arts is Art.
 High are their clear commands, but Art herself
 Makes holier summons. Ever open stand
 The doors of her free temple. At her shrine
 In service of the world, whose hurt she heals,
 Ye, too, physicians of the mind and heart—
 Shall ye not take the Hippocratic oath?
 Have ye not heard the voices of the night
 Call you from kindred, comfort, sloth and praise,
 To lead unto the light the willing feet
 That grope for order, harmony and joy?—
 To reach full hands of bounty unto those
 Who starve for beauty in our glut of gold?

How shall we honor him whom we revere—
 Lover of all the arts and of his land?
 How, but to cherish Beauty's every flower?—
 How, but to live with Beauty, and so be
 Apostles of Rejoicing to mankind?

ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON.